

OBSERVATIONS

ON

DOCTOR PRICE'S

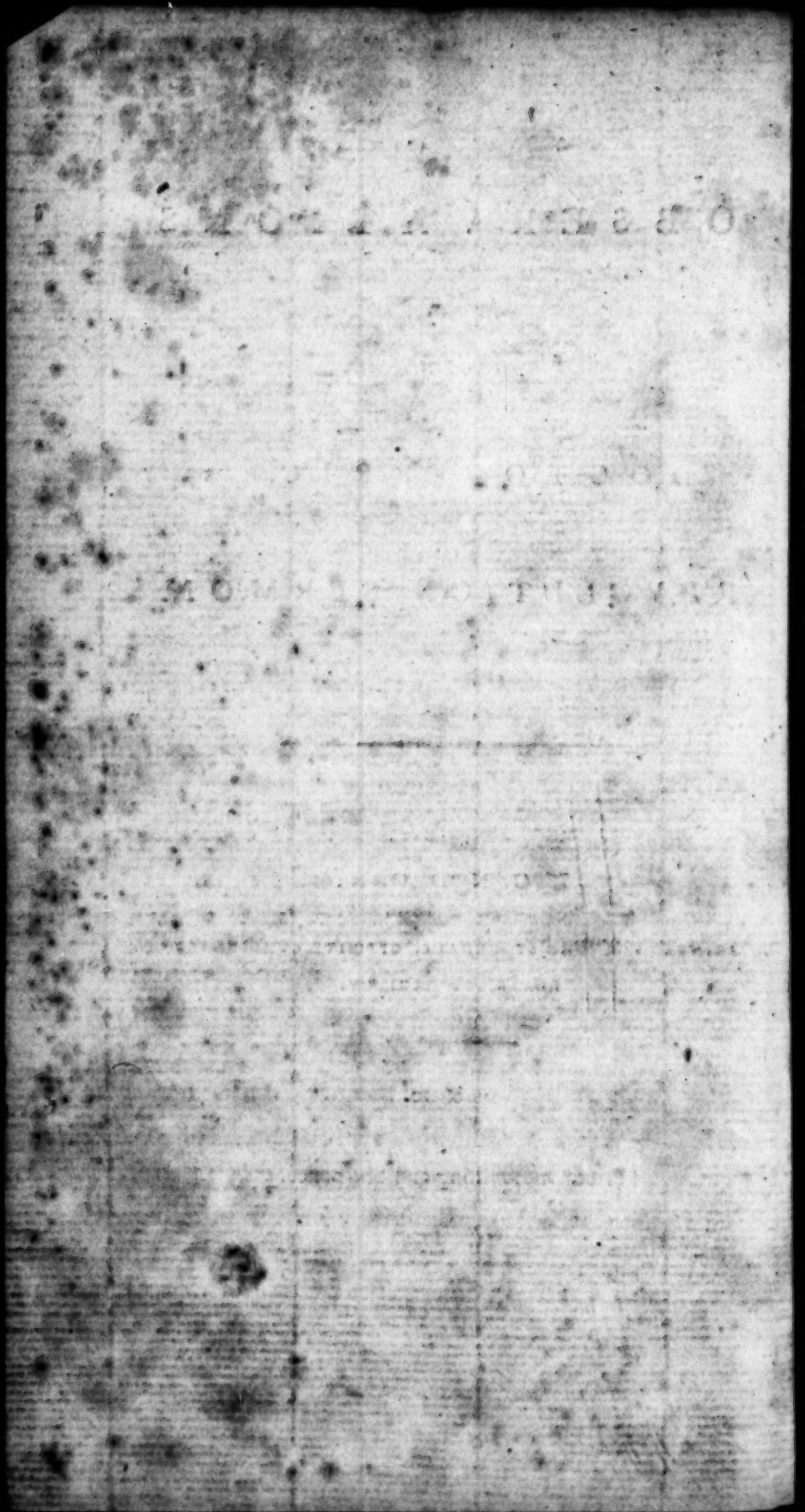
REVOLUTION SERMON.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR JOHN STOCKDALE, OPPOSITE BURLINGTON-
HOUSE, PICCADILLY,

MDCCLXG.

[Price One Shilling and Six-pence.]



OBSERVATIONS.

*Virtus itself turns vice being misapplied,
And vice sometime by action's dignified.
Within the infant rind of this small flower
Poison has residence and medicine power.
For this, being smelt, with that sense cheers each part;
Being tasted, slays all senses with the heart.
Two such opposed foes encamp them still
In men, as well as herbs, grace and rude will.
And where the worser is predominant,
Full soon the canker death eats up that plant.*

SHAKESPEARE.

THE end and object of all government is the happiness of society. The happiness here meant consists not in the rude and boisterous direction of our own actions, but in the security of our natural and civil rights; namely, our lives,

in which is included our personal liberty and safety, our property and our good name. This is usually intended when a state is said to be governed by equal laws; that is, by laws which equally secure these three invaluable rights to all its citizens, and which, though they restrain our natural liberty of action in some respects, form the safeguard of what remains. The sacrifice is small, and in the service of the law, is perfect freedom.

The checks imposed upon persons intrusted with the government, by custom, public opinion, or by a senate consisting either of deputies, or of the whole society, and in any other way that may have been adopted by different communities, are the means by which this object of civil government is secured.

These checks however produced, are therefore secondary to the object for which they are created, and must in themselves, according to their greater or lesser force, limit the power of government in order to secure its proper conduct. All government is an imitation of the divine will, as
far

far as is consistent with the weakness of human nature: and God we know is a Being infinitely wise, good, and powerful. The governors of the earth should therefore possess as much liberty to exercise these three great and beneficent qualities, as is consistent with the safety of the state against the probable abuse of it.

It is obvious therefore, that a monarchy where the monarch really acts with wisdom, virtue and power, is infinitely the best government for the welfare of mankind; but as it too often happens that princes are weak and wicked like other men, most nations have introduced such checks and limitations upon the authority of their princes, as suit the conveniencies and necessities of their respective countries. And in these checks, or the laws providing for them, is comprized what is usually called the Constitution of a State.

The best form of government is that which is restrained and regulated by the representatives of the people. At least the experience of the world hitherto has given us the assurance to form this conclusion;

nor is reason wanting to confirm it. Public opinion is too weak ; custom, without other assistance, is still weaker. An aristocracy is too strong, and a democracy too wild to effect this purpose. While representation mixes power with wisdom, and while it secures and restrains, does not too much weaken the hands of government ; but let us always recollect, that representation, and the checks that flow from it, are no positive good in themselves, any farther than that they are wise and proper means of procuring it. The question is, not whether they are perfect or imperfect in their own nature, but whether they produce the end required of them, in securing and protecting the happiness of mankind by equal laws.

If therefore under any form of government that end be obtained, the means of securing its continuance are only a secondary, though a very necessary consideration ; for while it is extremely desirable to render the happiness of a people permanent, still persons who are soberly and truly wise, recollecting always the imperfection

of human nature, will seriously consider, whether present enjoyment may not be sacrificed to an endeavour after its prospective continuance; and whether it would not be better to leave future security to the wisdom of futurity.

To expect perfection in a government, is to expect what never has happened or ever will, because it is not to be found among the materials from which governments are formed. There is no instance in history of a nation at once receiving new laws, or a new constitution, at the hands of a legislature formed for that purpose; but arising out of the manners, situation, and necessities of the people, they partake of the imperfections incident to such sources of legislation. From the first, if it were possible, we might expect philosophical and theoretical perfection; from the latter, we receive that mixture of strength and weakness, in which as the one or the other is predominant, consists the happiness or misery of mankind. The example of different nations will best illustrate a position that appeals to the experience of the world. In this country, so long fortified by the sea against foreign disturbance, and secured by the spirit of industry, and by its compact size from private disorder, all our fears, and consequently all our laws, are principally directed against the foreign power, which if unrestrained, might introduce the mischiefs of absolute dominion. They are therefore strong and sufficient on the subject of public liberty,

In this country, the end of government, which consists in the happiness of its subjects, is most indisputably produced, and that, of itself, argues the sufficiency of the means which produce it. For more than an hundred years, we have enjoyed a state of prosperity unknown to other ages and nations. The inhabitants are protected in their persons, their property, and their reputation; riches have poured in upon us from every quarter; plenty smiles

on while little care is taken for repressing private enormities, and less for repelling foreign hostility. In France (I speak now of its happier hour) their situation on the continent, and the size of their country exposing them to great external danger, makes an absolute power necessary for their safety, and the law, while it admits a great military force, and raises an absolute power to keep it under proper controul, foresees that from such circumstances private disorders would be perpetually recurring, unless prevented by the strictest regulations. In France therefore you will find little law, but some custom to overawe the prince. A spirit of military armament breathes throughout its provinces, and the police is celebrated for its competency and success. In the eastern countries of Asia, private disorders are common, confusion of legal provisions universal. No regular government. The whole power is therefore

cen-

on the face of the country, and in the midst of our wealth, we have remembered our duty both to God and man. These national blessings are chiefly attributable to our government, and that government to the freedom and liberties of the people.

The freedom or liberties of the people are principally guarded by the frame of our legislature, and by the acts which have distinguished that legislature for many centuries. Some defects may, upon speculative principles, be found in its constitution, but they have existed from the be-

centered in the prince. Wars are frequent, and destruction follows them. In such a situation the sovereign is more than absolute. He is despotic, because he is the only power that can protect them against such terrible calamities. He is for the benefit of the people despotic, inasmuch as the rigour of a tyrant is tender mercy, when compared to the cruelty of a conqueror and a stranger. These facts are mentioned not as insensible to the misfortunes that attend them, but as a proof of the manner in which the laws of a country adapt themselves to its wants, and that great evils arising from an abuse of government, are universally submitted to, in order to avoid the still greater of no government at all, or one not suited to our condition.

ginning with it. They have grown with its growth, have accompanied its success, and afford at this time no other symptoms of decay, than they have for ages long since past without misfortune.

It must likewise be admitted, that although the end of government be indeed produced by the means at present used, yet wisdom will always carry its view forward to futurity; and not content with selfish enjoyment, endeavour, by securing a continuance of these means, to entail the like enjoyment on posterity. But in order to make any act upon this principle necessary, it must be proved, that the means now used are deficient to the degree of doubting their continuance, which will not be easily done, when those defects, if defects they are, have existed for some centuries, and have not failed: It must be proved likewise, that the hazard of appealing from settled laws to wild opinion, is balanced by the prospect of advantage, and the absence of danger; in other words, that we do not give up a present benefit for the chance of continuing that benefit, when

when it runs no great degree of risk, and may well be left to the wisdom of the times in which it shall begin to fail. This argument against innovation is greatly strengthened by the consideration, that it cannot be ascertained, except by weak conjecture, whether these very defects do not contribute to the existence of the state, in which they appear, not as ulcerous blotches, but as gentle humours that pervade the whole of the body, and flow through the veins of the healthiest constitution.

This being the situation of our country, what motive is it that can animate the Doctor to blow his trumpet in Sion, to beat his drum ecclesiastic, and to proclaim reforms for evils that do not exist?

Is it that the congregations of the conventicle decline in this age of peace and good sense? or is the money of bankrupt France like unto the money of bankrupt America, destined only for the wages of prostitution? When no good motive can be found, it is not calumny to seek after a bad one. But to retract suspicions of
this

this odious nature, is it the madness of his pulpit that has for ages, without a motive, sent forth its anathemas against the political peace of society?—that madness, which even Milton himself has branded as a quality belonging only to the fallen angels, a contempt of dignities and a hatred of authority.

Perhaps too it may be the Doctor's boast, as it is the boast of some men, not that they lead mankind, as Hugh Peters formerly did, through crimble-dum and cramble-dum to heaven, and thus by confounding, enslave the understanding, but by appearing to enlarge, bewilder its progress, and perplex its operations by instruments too unwieldy for men to manage: so while one is undermining the foundation of government, and blowing up the content of social subordination, another, at the very altar of God, is handing round to his ghastly congregation the poisoned chalice of infidelity, fraught with bitter ingredients of fear, distrust, and dismay. Happy and congenial pair! the former subscribes to the government of the state only to subvert it,

and

and makes allegiance the servant of rebellion; while the latter retains the name of Christianity the better to abuse it, and professes religion to make the blow of infidelity more effectual.

What the motive may be, must be left to Him, who is the searcher of hearts, and from whom no secrets are hid. Its object is not so closely concealed from human sight; and when the reader surveys the splendor of the title-page; when he sees that the Sermon was delivered by a Fellow of the AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL Societies at PHILADELPHIA and BOSTON; when he looks further and finds that this evangelical scrap of political divinity is bound up with a supplemental code of *French* legislation, interspersed with notes taken from parliamentary registers, and exaggerated accounts of *French* population, he will be at no loss to guess whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; its *whereabout* will be instantly discovered.

It is now time to attend more closely to the Sermon itself. We shall therefore begin at that part of it which seems to have

have afforded to the Doctor the highest satisfaction.

* He has enjoyed one Revolution, seen another, and expects a third more glorious still. To the two last, as he contributed at least his endeavour, and perhaps some assistance, it is not wonderful that he should give the preference, since gratitude can keep no pace with zeal heated by action. We however may form a better and milder judgment, in comparing the consequences derived to Great-Britain from what is called the Revolution, with those likely to be reaped by France and America from their bungling imitations. Of the latter, it would be a want of common compassion to speak with asperity—Their misfortunes are their punishment, both those which they feel at present, and those which are rapidly advancing. But as civil subordination was not totally thrown aside; as the hands of government were only changed, not cut off; and as the power of the mesne lords survived their disaffection to the sovereign; it is not to be expected that the

misfortunes of that country should be so marked as those which now form the beginning of sorrows in France. Though steeped in poverty up to the very hips; though pointed at by the slowly-moving finger of Scorn; though discarded from the fountain of their existence, kept as a cistern for foul toads to knot and gender in; yet have they not robbed the altars of the sacred vessels of religion, abandoned the ministers of the gospel to houseless poverty, or left the administration of justice, that great guard of society, to the wisdom and temperance of the mob.

To speak of the Revolution in France, is to speak of a Revolution more operative upon the manners and sentiments of all mankind, than on the government of one particular people. A whole army invited and bribed into treachery and desertion; all ranks of people levelled; all landmarks of provinces removed; property made the mock of drunken senators; the course of law stopped, and religion as it were abolished; (for to deprive its ministers of respect and of the means of existence, is to do all that
man

man can do towards abolishing it;)—what is this but to give a true, though a faint, picture of ferocious nature,

When wild in woods the noble savage ran;
with this great and singular aggravation, that to the savageness of uncivilized barbarism are added the vicious refinements of a society long enervated in the lap of peace, long used to lettered ease and happiness undisturbed. That such a Revolution should be thus suddenly introduced, must be attributed to the influence of very powerful and malignant principles, and be feared as the harbinger of worse.

How different from such conduct was the management of that event in our history, which *propter honoris causa* has usually been stiled the Revolution.

The country had long groaned under actual oppression. The laws were overturned; the religion of the people was profaned and attacked; the property of the church was seized; the fondest principles of the nation were insulted. After
long

long suffering and patient forbearance the whole people rose as one man. To do what?—to make fanciful improvements in the theory of their government?—to overturn every settled notion, natural, civil, and religious?—to level all ranks; and by these means bring about an universal chaos in society?—Far be such imputations from such an event. Grievances were redressed, violations of the law rectified, and the only cause of the whole was the only one who suffered from it; and even that suffering was more inflicted by his own fears, than the revenge of his injured people. The means employed to produce this effect were equally moderate with the end obtained. Subordination was strictly preserved; the reins of government never once relaxed; no treachery was used, and if it had been attempted would not have succeeded. The first men in rank and experience were obeyed by the rest from inclination. No visionary speculations (although Doctor Price's lived and wrote then to the same tune) were indulged. Past grievances were redressed as the best means

of future improvement ; and whatever of improvement followed beside, was produced by time, and followed from causes, which the experienced statesmen who laid them knew would be certain, and only certain as gradual alterations brought about by events, not arbitrarily imposed by discordant speculation *. The people were equally good and wise with their leaders. No hatred of superiority, no disaffection to the higher orders of society, and no lust of revenge were displayed. All attempts to introduce confusion were prevented. The army, indeed, that King James had collected together was injudiciously

* The extreme caution of our ancestors in not giving way to a speculation of improvement, has been mentioned already. It is observable, that in the Bill of Rights, which is considered as the key-stone of our constitution, no new right or liberty was established which had not before been enjoyed by the people, both *de facto* as well as *de jure* : and almost all the improvements that have followed from the Revolution, have been made many years after it, and have followed rather as the result of convenience than right. Thus the dividing the expenditure of the state at the Revolution into the civil list and the public expence, though
it

ciously disbanded by their general, Lord Feversham. The report caused an universal alarm, and the leaders of the nation punished the hasty indiscretion of the general by confinement. Thus what in France has been encouraged was reprobated here, as the certain way to overturn government, in seeking to reform it. No rebellious relaxation of principle in the lower orders of people was encouraged or existed. Notwithstanding the actual oppression of James, and what is worse, the abuse of their fondest prejudices from stronger prejudice of his own; notwithstanding the discou-

it seemed to point merely at a regulation of revenue, has had the effect of obliging the King to hold a Session of Parliament every year; which obligation, had it been proposed as an abstract question, might have met with much difficulty. So little did the leaders of the glorious Revolution indulge themselves in probable improvement, that the press was even after that period continued under the oppression of a licencer, by a new law; and on the only topic which called for abstracted disquisition, their debates have been censured as exhibiting rather the jargon of schoolmen, than the reason of politicians.

ragement shewn to Protestants, and the
 establishment of a public mass-house in
 the camp, with other grievances that strike
 the senses of a nation ; yet when the Prince
 of Orange had considerably advanced in
 his expedition, and was enabled to hold
 out the protection of a well-disciplined
 army, no Englishman deserted their co-
 lours, their master, or their oath. Lord
 Cornbury, a man of high family and great
 worth, attempted to carry over his regi-
 ment to the Prince. Knowing their ha-
 tred to desertion, he was obliged to de-
 bauch them by stratagem into the enemy's
 quarters. It was then as dangerous to
 return as to go on. Out of the whole party
 thus betrayed and surprized, many of the
 officers, indeed, but very few of the com-
 mon men, imitated the example of their
 commander. In this instance appears the
 true morality of the Revolution. Officers
 had been equally sworn to unconditional
 obedience as well as the common men ;
 yet as such a tie is subordinate to others
 of higher consequence, they did well to
 break through it, when exposed to that
 alternative,

alternative, of whose delicate nature their improved educations and state of life enabled them to judge. The common men have indeed the same duty, but not the same knowledge. If they break their oaths to one master, they will to another, and be faithful to none. Hence if they are virtuous, they are slow to act at all; and when they do, for the most part follow the example of their officers, whose fortunes they share, whose judgment they can rely on, and have been used to obey.

How differently do they manage these things in France!—They invert the order of events, and the evils that caused our Revolution are themselves caused by their's. The object in that country is, without injury or oppression (other than proceeded from the nature of their government) to make a total revolution in their laws and manners, while the means they employ for that end are anarchy, or a dissolution of all civil ties, by putting arms into the hands and metaphysical ideas into the heads of the people, a great and very great majority of whom can neither wield the one with

prudence, nor apprehend the other without madness.

While we thus freely speak of what is passing among the French, as they ludicrously stile their nation, let it not be thought that we approve of the abuses that were said to exist in their monarchy. Abuses there certainly were, and there as certainly were means of reforming them, without bringing down the whole frame of government upon their heads. As far as such an object was really intended by them, it was highly rational and desirable. The evils which have been ushered in under that disguise, are those only that we have exclaimed against. The blow that assaulted the Bastile would have been applauded, had it not at the same time levelled all the bulwarks of security and peace.

A revolution thus highly seasoned cannot but be gratifying to the heated appetite of the Patriot Divine, not only as it removes the fences of authority, and overturns the hierarchy of the state, but as it opens into life those seeds of rank abuse, which have long been planted in the bale-

ful garden of false philosophy ; seeds, that left to thrive and flourish in their native air, give shade and nourishment to the world ; but come out from the laboratory of the philosopher—the bitterest poison.

The great principle of this false philosophy consists in supposing, that the highest refinement of abstracted truth is fit to be applied by all mankind to the offices of common life. It appears in almost every page of the Sermon under different colours, and with varied forms of expression ; but upon the whole we may pronounce it to be virtue pushed to an extreme, from whence results an evil different from, though equally great with ignorance, its opposite. Superstition and incredulity are indeed extremes ; the one is produced by too much, the other by too little knowledge. The first is the vice of a barbarous age, the latter of declining refinement. Hitherto we have suffered much from the former, and now (some small interval betwixt) we seem to be approaching fast to the other. Maxims that were formerly confined to the schools and closets of the

learned, are now handed about the world as containing principles of civil conduct for all mankind; maxims, which it is impossible they should understand, unless they were all truly wise, or practise without being perfect.

It is hard to combat positions that come under such an assuming shape and appearance. There is little doubt, indeed, but that these maxims, clearing away human imperfection, are fairer in speculation than any that are now in use, as applied to common life, but then it must be remembered, that they are not fitted for action, that they are too finely spun for common eyes, and that they are therefore incompatible with the practice of mankind; though, as questions of science, they might well be discussed by such persons as could manage them with skill, since from discussions of that kind something useful may be struck out, even from materials that would be pernicious themselves in other hands. The telescope opens the wonders of new worlds to the eye of the astronomer, and while it gratifies curiosity, enlarges science, and enables him to confer fresh benefits on those,
who

who, ignorant of the process, enjoy the effect. But is it therefore to be wished, that Providence had invested the naked eye with the same elongation of sight, or would it not have made us stumble over straws, under our feet, while with distant and elevated views we were surveying the altitude of mountains? By attempting to remove the necessary ignorance of mankind, that generally displays itself in reverential wonder, we remove the shade from the light, and blast our eyes with its excess; we strip the blooming fruit of its insect blush, as useless and pernicious; like a base empiric, we rob the stone of its slimy coat, till the tortured patient dies under the decrease of his malady; and to sum up all, in clearing the eye of the misty film that guards it, we destroy the sight itself.

This specious design of making mankind act upon principles so refined, that they must mislead, but cannot govern them, even if they are understood, is fraught with every possible mischief; and being the only ostensible cause of the late revolution
in

in France, fills the mind with alarming apprehensions for the peace of the world, lest the poison hitherto confined to the dissensions of gownsmen, should have diffused itself amidst the mass of mankind.

People who speculate, feeling the necessity of change to which the frail nature of mortality is constantly exposed, have been led to conjecture by what means this age was to be succeeded by another, and how this enlightened state was to be followed by its companion of darkness, since neither Goth nor Vandal remained to execute it. In the moral as in the material world, there is a constant succession of day and night. All history proves it. One day telleth another, one night certifieth another. As Rome rose on the ruins of Greece, so modern Europe sprang out of fallen Rome, and must itself fall and give way to others. The event seems to be certain, though the means may perhaps be disputed.

What, however, neither Goth nor Vandal remain to do for us, we may do for ourselves. Such convulsions as those in
France,

France, aided by such writings as those we are now canvassing, will in the end sap the foundation of government, by destroying the influence of opinion upon which it principally depends. For it must be something more than actual force, that makes the many submit to the few, even for their own advantage; and in viewing this first open avowal of levelling principles in France, I cannot help fancying myself in ancient Rome, reading the account of the first northern irruption, and predicting, that what was formerly slight skirmishes on the frontiers, easily repelled and confined to that distance, but which had then become a powerful invasion, would in a course of time, and after frequent repetitions, bring about that fall of empire from which not even empires are exempted.

The press, that has yielded so many blessings to mankind, is the chief instrument employed for the propagation of these new principles, and by instilling maxims of this kind into minds not prepared to receive them, much the same effect is produced,

duced, as at the first translation of the bible. Though nothing but truth was opened to the world, yet it was above the common understanding; and left to their own suggestions, the people of those days, assumed with the names of the Jews in the Old Testament, their character, passions and power. Hence cities were stormed by divine command, and men, women and children, were massacred agreeably to what was then thought, the Word of God.

As the press is the medium through which the poison is diffused, so are declamations against old customs, prejudices and errors, some of the ingredients that help to compose it; declamations, that are specious and sensible, and would be convincing, were men less men than they are. Thus the lively sense of honor that descended to us from our warlike ancestors, that high, noble and animating quality, which softens the hardships of life, corrects the vices and exalts the virtues of society, and supplies even the deficiencies of religion. This proud spirit of ancient chivalry and modern honor, has soonest felt the

the blows of unfeeling scepticism; that spirit which even Philosophy herself has dreamt of, and has prefixed to a code of morality *; these venerable checks of conscience are now nearly removed, and exist only in recollection.

All our old prejudices, harmless and necessary, exist no longer. Those soft delusions, that cheered us in our afflictions, cheer us no more. The holly and the mistletoe no longer garnish the hall of laughter and plenty; vain pageantry! even kisses under it are kissed no more; promoters of vice, and unsubstantial pleasures, that hang not on the lip! The same dry and unfeeling ideas are extended to other innocent frivolities, that are more interesting to the peace of mankind; and the mind is left bare to the cold impressions that reason may make upon it, while venerable errors are overturned, as the cathedrals of ancient days were overturned by the ravages of rebellion, and were exchanged for the *reasonable* convenience of a modern chapel. Cathedrals, that by

* Paley's Moral and Political Philosophy.

shed-

shedding a dim religious light, and lengthening out a solemn stillness through their arched vaults, make even stone and mortar subservient to the purposes of morality.

However unpleasant and unprofitable these lesser filings of modern philosophy may appear, yet as the great attempt made by its supporters is directed to the subversion of civil government, so shall we imitate them, and the Doctor, in considering it, as principally applied to that subject.

We have seen how fatal all attempts at weakening the hands of government must prove to the happiness of mankind, and may conclude from thence, that they are forbidden even by the earliest law, the law of nature. Nor is revealed religion silent, however weak its voice may vibrate in the ears of modern philosophy. Every page of the New Testament inculcates the preservation of peace and submission to our superiors; not that it entirely forbids resistance, but agreeably to the soundest wisdom, considers cases that may require it as above any defined notion of law, as standing upon their own particular grounds; and

and while it recommends obedience as generally preferable to resistance, does not prescribe bounds to those precautions which self-preservation necessarily requires, and which the necessity that creates them must limit.

In these maxims is included the love of our country, which is best shewn as a general rule of action, by an adherence to its laws, and the spirit of its government. The Doctor thinks proper to make an apology for the silence which he falsely supposes the Gospel to maintain relative to this duty *; namely, that if such a duty (though necessary) had been inculcated at the time of the Christian dispensation, it would have produced more harm than good in the then state of things. Oh arrogance, above all arrogance! that it should be said, and said by a priest in his pulpit, that the Almighty refrained from inculcating a duty necessary to mankind, because in the then state of human affairs, it might have been attended with some political inconvenience arising from the abuse of man,

* Sermon, page 7.

which

which abuse is in no shape proved or asserted to have been necessary. What is this but to make the wisdom of the Doctor the standard of divine wisdom, and his power the power of the Almighty. But while these impious words fell from his tongue, (and I trust they escaped rather from omission than design) he should have remembered the example he praised, and have omitted to inculcate even necessary doctrine, if capable of introducing mischief to the world; recollecting, in the words of his text, which he soon rambles from, that when peace is within the walls, and plenteousness within the palaces of Jerusalem, the end of government is answered; and the duty we owe to our brethren and companions, should, under such circumstances, make us add, peace be unto thee!

Having thus viewed the Doctor glorying in the revolution his false principles have contributed to promote, and in the progress of these false principles, as promoted in return by that revolution, let us next advert to him in the act of advancing them, by a new application to principles,

ples, that by violating the order of nature, repugnant equally to the voice of reason and to the word of God, and opposite alike to the happiness and to the practice of mankind, can hardly be deemed sincere even in the person who supports them ; and the less so, when, prior to this second consideration of national events, we examine a few miscellaneous observations, which like short words dropt in hasty conversation, open those secrets of the heart that might have been concealed in more studied glosses ; from whence it will appear, that the tyrant is more the object of his dislike than the tyranny ; that his violence peeps out from under the cloak of assumed reason ; and that however ill disposed to submit himself, he can arrogantly assume dominion over others.

In one of his first pages *, this minister of the prince of peace, with great humility, violates by a hardy assertion, one of the first principles of our constitution, and makes the king responsible to his subjects. If it is meant that he is in con-

* Sermon, page 23.

science responsible to himself, and them, it is granted; but if the Doctor means, what the words and context imply, that he is personally, civilly, and in due course of of law responsible, then the first and most important principle of our constitution, which for the best of all reasons, preserves the personal safety of the sovereign, is violated. Every lawyer's clerk is familiar with this maxim, and the assertion that contradicts it, can alone proceed from some other motive than ignorance, and for a worse purpose than instruction.

Again, the sovereign is said to be the servant of the people *; he is their servant only as their sovereign; and to make a distinction between them, is to make one without a difference; being the sovereign of all, he is the servant of none in particular; and as sovereign, he represents them all. He is therefore his own master, since servitude consists in the power one man has over another, and no person has power over him. The obscurity of these terms gives the Doctor an opportunity to

* Sermon, page 26.

mislead the understanding, by using such as are disgraceful in sound, not sense, and by these means to lessen the character and dignity of his king.

The Doctor can quote Scripture, though he disdains to preach it. "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, since his eyes have seen thy salvation," is the enraptured exclamation of the priest of peace, at the prospect of national happiness in France *. If it means any thing, it means, that the benefit derived from the two events thus compared is equal in his eyes, since causes that produce equal effects, are as to that effect equal themselves. The simile I should rather chuse to apply to the event than to the person; for Doctor Price possesses the real modesty, as well as the true science of ancient Philosophy. But where was his usual prudence, when the religion of the place was profaned, and the sanctity of the pulpit defiled, by comparing the blessings of the Gospel with the pestilence of the national assembly—falsely so called? To be serious, when

* Sermon, page 49.

Our Saviour appeared the Heavens were opened ; at his awful presence the stars of the firmament shone forth a new splendor; and at his coming, life and immortality were brought to light. By the other, darkness overspread the land, mutual distrust poisoned the sources of human happiness, and discontent raised its aspiring, withered, and threatening head. To hear such blasphemy, such absurdity, and such iniquity of speech, who would not have been moved ? Even the drowsy conventicle itself must have shook with horror, though made up of sincere canvassing candidates, devout placemen in reversion, and fanatical fools, whose singularity forms their only distinction.

The malignant triumph increases with the progress of the sermon, as a procession swells with increasing splendor at its end, and the whole soul of the preacher bursts forth in rapture, when he sees " their king led in triumph*." That king, whom even Frenchmen love, or say they do, and whose good intentions have as yet been untainted by the breath of calumny.

* Sermon, page 49.

Thus

Thus does the spirit that hates a superior, gratify itself at the expence of every tender and humane feeling, and is accompanied with a violence that seeks to infuse a similar hatred into others. This spirit animates the whole sermon, and is no where to be found more conspicuously than in a grave passage, that informs the congregation they cannot be zealous *enough* in promoting the cause of liberty *. How absurd and pernicious are such maxims, when delivered from the pulpit, without qualification or restraint. What is it but to invite the better part of the audience to tumult at an election or an assize, and the lower order to break open the gaols, and to block up the House of Commons. Passive obedience in the last century, was the doctrine of the universities, and was condemned, because it laid down a general rule without qualification, of which the exception provided for resistance in particular cases, formed a material part; but the doctrine of the tabernacle improves upon this abuse, and lays down the exception

* Sermon, page. 20.

of resistance, without ever regarding or mentioning the general rule of obedience.

The overbearing insolence of sedition that commands a resistance of authority, is the traditional, hereditary, and indefeasible prerogative of the conventicle throne. Nor has this tyrant of an hour neglected to exert it, as will appear from consulting the pages of his sermon; the history of his *humble* despotism. One word will be enough to the wise. He directs his congregation to believe him. Persuasion will not persuade them, authority will not bind them, but Doctor Price *directs* them, and they obey *.

† Having thus made a few miscellaneous remarks upon detached passages, we will proceed to consider the reasoning of the Sermon, as applied to a national event in this country, and for which the rest of it seems to have been printed, namely, a confident assurance in the repeal of the Test Act. It has been seen, that this truly *illustrious Apostle of Liberty*, as his friends have somewhat ludicrously and irreverently

* Sermon, page 35.

† Ibid. p. 34.

called

called him*, expects the third Revolution to be extended over the whole world, and particularly over the narrow straits of Dover and Calais. French principles, and Dissenting want of them, may do much; but nothing will, in the opinion of some people, contribute so effectually to the salutary purpose of general confusion in this country as the repeal of the Test Laws; laws long cherished by a nation that knows somewhat of its own interest, as the guard and security of their civil rights, so far as religion is connected with them.

What other purpose can the Dissenters propose to themselves in promoting the repeal? Does the law cripple them? Are they excluded by it in point of fact? Are they not to be found in our army, our offices, and our dignities, nay, in our very church itself†? Are not our corporations filled

* Duc de Rochefoucault.

† Many chapters contain a *verse* of conforming integrity; but in one, not an hundred miles from Westminster, the Dissenters, some years ago, insisted upon nominating a Member, which was submitted to by the

filled with men of such active spirit? The law, notwithstanding this abuse, answers a good purpose to the state, by forcing such who entertain opinions pernicious to the commonweal to dissemble them, when it cannot totally prevent their entrance. At the same time it inflicts no injury on the Dissenters, because it does not, in point of fact, exclude them, even if that exclusion was an injury. The honour of trusting to indemnifying * acts, or in dissembling their faith, is for them only to consider, and cannot be deemed by them

Minister of that day, in opposition to the strongest claims of church propriety. He still feeds in the same stall.

* When any doctrine is said to be pernicious, it should be understood to mean destructive of the principles of government. Whether it is bad in itself, or not, is a question foreign to our purpose, and perhaps above our decision. So let me take this opportunity of adding, when the *Dissenters* are mentioned by name in these observations, those only are meant who make their faith a stalking-horse of worldly ambition; not such as, equally interesting in number and character, worship the universal God in the way they think best.

disgrace-

disgraceful, or they would not comply with it.

In examining the arguments for a repeal, I think myself bound to be concise. The subject has been exhausted by the contests of a century, and by the writings of hundreds. Nothing having passed to vary its nature at the present period, I shall not, for one, think myself capable of altering or increasing the wisdom of successive ages: but if modern wisdom be desired, let us turn our eyes to the real champion of the Church and of true Religion; a Minister honest at least, if unfortunate; though fallen on evil days, yet venerable in ruins, and great in despite of misfortune*.

All government we have seen, and must have noticed from our cradles, depends more upon the influence of opinion, than the terror of actual force. Religion lends a weight to opinions, that cannot be produced from any other source. The consequence is, that its holy ministers are generally intrusted with the education of

* Lord North.

youth,

youth, in order to give the sanction of religion to the reason of morality; upon both which accounts the religion of a country and the ministers of it, should be such only as entertain sentiments congenial to the government of the state; in other words, there should be an Established Church.

It will not be necessary to prove at full length, that the principles and doctrines of the Church of England did at all times, and do still more at present, support by their influence the true spirit of our mixt and limited monarchy; or that the opinions of the Dissenters incline more to a republican form of government. History will prove both as a fact, and that fact will be explained upon reasonable grounds by a review of the faith and writings of each. If any alteration has taken place in the sentiments of the latter, since they rode triumphant in substantial dominion, it has been favourable to those latitudinarian principles that extend the wide idea of a democracy, to the still wider idea of no government at all.

The

The reasonableness of an established church is so clear, that in many countries, and likewise in this, attempts have been made to drive the whole people into an unity of religion. However desirable that end may be, yet if the means intended to produce it intrench upon the independence of opinion, they cannot be held in too much abhorrence as the worst of slavery. The end of Government is answered, as far as it can be answered with propriety, by not permitting the influence arising from its authority to be placed in hands that will, by means of such influence, give effect to opinions destructive of the very government that protects them. No injury is offered to the persons excluded. Their exclusion is their own act, and proceeds from a restraint which every government has a most indisputable right to impose. This right is acknowledged by the Dissenters themselves, who have not even proposed a repeal of the Test Law in favour of the Papists. The right is therefore acknowledged; yet it must be confessed, that the grounds upon which that

right

right ought to be exerted are disputed; but, as it strikes me, with little difference, since the doctrines of the Church of Rome are scarcely less abhorrent to the spirit of our monarchy than the opinions of the Dissenters; and if supremacy be necessary, what matters it whether a foreign supremacy be allowed, or no supremacy at all?

It has been said, that no Test being required from Members of Parliament, it is absurd to require one from those who execute the law, while those who make it are exempted *. This objection proceeds from an inattention to the principle upon which it is imposed. Members of Parliament have no office as such out of their own House; they therefore cannot lend the aid of the executive government to the disseminator of principles pernicious to the state. But it will be said, they can do it more effectually in the Senate. It is for that very reason they are permitted to sit there. In that assembly all religions ought to be heard, and every subject should have its supporter. Nor is it attended with

* Sermon, page 39.

any inconvenience. The Dissenting Members can never do mischief in that place, or rather do any thing, unless they are a majority; and if they are, according to the principles of our Constitution they would cease to be Dissenters; would no longer be Presbyterian, Anabaptist, Quaker, Lutheran, Calvinist, Arminian, Socinian, Independent, Fifth Monarchy Men, &c. &c. but by becoming the majority of the Senate, the conventicle would become the established church.

Persons who know what weight even the appearance of official splendor carries with it, from the Lord Chamberlain at court, to the Beadle at church, and the still greater weight their power adds, will easily see the reason why none should be invested with either the one or the other, whose principles and sentiments differ from those of the state, by whom both of them are conferred. If it were otherwise, the gaping multitude might follow the Mayor to the meeting-house instead of the cathedral; and the line once broken, the Methodist chapel, or the Quaker's tabernacle,

nacle, would equally hold the insignia of authority with the more reasonable Presbyterian meeting. Jack would ride three horses at a time, and eat custards of all ingredients *.

It is said by the Doctor, that the emperor Joseph has invited the Jews into his dominions, and that France is blessed with a Protestant Prime Minister †. How happy the emperor Joseph has proved in his attempts at philosophical improvement, history will tell. Brave Brabanters! let not my page be stained with ridicule upon you, WORTHY PATRIOTS, who are defending with your blood the laws and the religion of your ancestors, consequently your own peace. May your efforts be successful! but that they may be so, disdain to follow the example of your be-

* Addison, who was no mean judge of the springs of human conduct, introduces the Freeholder into St. Paul's Cathedral at the time of divine service, who sees, to his unspeakable satisfaction, the mace and the corporation (of whom not above two or three were asleep) most devoutly present. Vide Freeholder.

† Sermon, page 38.

wildered

wildered neighbours, and be contented with the laws your parents have enjoyed. As to Mr. Necker, if a tree is known by its fruit, we shall not envy France the blessings of universal anarchy.

It has been said in addition to other arguments, that the Test Laws impose a hardship on the Dissenters. The right of the state to make them has been proved already, has never been denied, and is admitted by the Dissenters themselves; the propriety of its exercise in this instance, must depend upon the considerations before stated. If it be a hardship, they themselves impose it upon themselves; and a much heavier hardship would it be upon a vast majority of the nation, to have an Anabaptist First Lord of the Treasury, and a dry Quaker Master of the Revels; or to speak with more seriousness, the very spring and source of their political safety, diverted from its original and established course.

* Ireland and Scotland, it is said, have no test, nor will it be denied, but that the situations of some countries may be so pe-

* Sermon, page 37.

culiar,

culiar, as not to require it, especially in countries dependent upon others, whose religion, or mode of faith, differ from that of the superior country. In both of the nations beforementioned, the state of the Established Church is peculiar. In Ireland the church, though not including a fifth part of the inhabitants, is, notwithstanding, the established church, because it agrees with that of the superior kingdom, for whose safety, including the safety of the whole, an uniformity upon that head is procured; but under such circumstances it would be a great injustice to make that religion, a religion excluded from the offices of the state, which ought upon *general* principle to have been the established one; a middle way is therefore pursued between exclusion on one side, and establishment on the other. As much benefit is obtained from the principle of uniformity in religious matters, as could be obtained without injustice. In Scotland the established church differs from that of the superior country, and was formed out of the ruins of the latter; it is therefore but reasonable

sonable, that it should not be excluded as well as overturned, and in point of fact, the one was a price for the other. Till therefore the Church of England can be proved to stand in a similarly peculiar situation to those of the two other countries, no arguments drawn from them are applicable to it *.

One argument more I am bound to notice, because it involves an accusation of *iniquity* in the Church of England †.

Modest

* In point of fact, no test is required in either of these two countries, but this does not proceed from the reasonableness of the principle, but from the convenience of political events. Ireland was formerly a dependant, and is now a protected country. It is therefore but reasonable, that the established Church should, by its doctrines, contribute to the support of the whole. Scotland was formerly an independant country, and is now, though united, protected by the more affluent country to which it is joined; still it retains a church of its own, although of a modern date, because from historical reasons such an establishment became necessary, but the example of both countries contributes nothing to the general reasoning on the subject; because the effect their ecclesiastical regulations may have upon their civil management, is

D

scarcely

† Sermon, page 36.

Modest and humble word ! but Doctor Price is a dissenting *Pope*, and his libels are *infallible* ! It is said, that the participation of the holy sacrament is made a qualification for Rakes and Atheists to attain the offices of government ; and by such means what was intended by Our Saviour to be the purest and most abstracted rite of religion, is turned into an interested tool of corrupt ambition. Omitting to regard the decent, charitable, and truly christian assertions thus made by the Doctor without proof, and which can only in justice apply upon general principles to those who receive the sacrament in a mode their consciences disapprove, let us see whether he is not as much mistaken in his argument, as he is unsupported in his calumniating imputations. Qualification means something positive to recommend a

scarcely visible in their protected situation, and is maintained in its proper state by the superintending influence of the superior country, whose principles, built upon a rock, have hitherto withstood the assaults of ignorance, and the sap of subterraneous and mistaken philosophy.

per-

person, but the receiving the Holy Sacrament, is intended only as a test. The qualification, if indeed it can in any shape be called by that name, is, that the person applying for an office should be a member of the Church of England, of which fact, his partaking in the most solemn of its rites, is the best and clearest evidence. Assertions, nay oaths, may lye. More trifling compliances may be assumed for the purpose, and be forgiven; but the taking of that which, according to all modes of faith, is their condemnation before God if untruly taken, is supposed to be evidence that cannot lye or be mistaken. The Doctor I am afraid knows, that to some indeed it is a qualification, not an incidental test; that they take it for a civil purpose only with their lips, are true to the eye, and false to the heart; I draw this fearful conclusion, because his whole argument leads me to it, and discloses a facility of pardon in the austerity of the Meeting House, that is not to be found in the indulgencies of St. Peter.

If however it be an imputation to make the sentiments and ceremonies of religion subservient to the attainment of civil purposes, so I apprehend it is not quite without blame, to bring about religious improvements by a prostitution of civil integrity. The degree of blame may perhaps be different, but that difference is amply supplied by the difference of truth between the one and the other. Our newspapers have lately announced to us certain associations that have been formed by the Dissenters in several counties, to support only such candidates for the next Parliament, as will pledge themselves to countenance a repeal of the Test Law. The fact is therefore certain, and what is the inference? What is it but to make the cause of their conventicle a qualification for offices? To take away the judgment of mankind, and to damn those that are not within their own pale? Furthering the cause of what they profess to be religion, by the worst of all bad political manœuvres?—Be this a warning to you, ye who worship the God of your Fathers,

thers, and let not the cause of that Church, which has escaped so many perils in so many distant ages, perish in your hands !

The proof that is thus given us of the means by which some persons would advance the cause of religion, and of the use to which it may be converted, was by no means necessary. The same persons have long manifested to the world, that religion may become a mere cloak for the unrighteous dealings of men. Is one of these holy *devotees* a Lawyer ? he has a whole tribe of clients. Is he a Doctor ? his physic purges his brethren : nor is traffic less affected by the intrigues of the chapel, than law and physic. Too true it is, that a coincidence of opinion in religious matters, like the spirit of party, is converted into a bond of civil connexion, with a view to the advantage of their united exertions, and is often adopted solely for that very purpose.

After all, when we consider the imprudence of attempting any alteration in matters that recur to first principles, and involve so many interesting and discordant
con-

concerns, we shall still more be inclined to forbear doing so, when not even an appearance of necessity requires it, and when, if it is done, it will be considered more as the result of terror than conviction. No persons are in fact excluded by the Test Laws, since they are daily violated as to *that* effect, though, as we have seen, without defeating their object with respect to the state. The repeal of them must therefore proceed from some other motive, than from a sense of injury that is not felt, and for that other motive we can be at no loss to guess, when the end proposed is to be effected by storming the senate, and putting the senators under duress. The means are more desirable than the immediate object, inasmuch as they lead, not to a repeal of one, but to a confusion of all law. I will not suppose, that the grievance really complained of, and proposed to be removed, is the repugnance that may be felt by some persons in dissembling their faith for their interest, and in submitting to the disagreeable necessity of concurring with a great majority of their fellow citizens,

zens, in contradiction to their own *better* opinion. I will not suppose this, because I should be sorry to attribute so much insincerity to any one without proof, and because if it should exist, the difficulties that oppose its entrance into the state, ought to be increased rather than diminished.— Here let us pause! Whether the repeal of the Test is wise or not in itself, becomes a consideration light as air, when compared to the danger of surrendering the will of the Legislature to strong importunity, repeated efforts, and violent threats. Even if the object were ever so proper to be complied with, the manner in which it is forced upon our assent, would induce us to reject the very consideration of it. One compliance would only beget another. Concession is the parent of demand, and demand, like a thriftless child, whose passions increase with their indulgence, after exhausting what his parent can give, dies cursing the kindness that destroys him.

Thus having described the object of certain people, as expressed in the various
pages

pages of this edifying Sermon, and the means by which they propose to accomplish it, there remains nothing else to consider, but of some antidote to repel their progress, and prevent their malice; to confound their confusion, to shut our ears against the importation of foreign principles, and at least to bind the *bands* of those false philosophers, who mix reason with madness, and would destroy the peace of society *secundum artem*. Some persons, perhaps, animated by too much zeal, would recommend the utmost severity, *ense rescindendum est ne pars sincera trahatur*.—Such attempts are fruitless: they are worse; for in the agitation occasioned by endeavouring to effectuate them, these miserable people and their writings are snatched from the oblivion that would otherwise soon overtake them, and as they become infamous, become public; a price ever ready to be paid for such a compensation. History too will inform us, that the restless zeal of a fanatic would run with eagerness into the grave of a martyr, if the flame that consumed him could communicate itself

self to the world. The Church that they thus attempt to overturn has ever entertained better notions of repelling and preventing their attacks. With the true meekness of Christianity, it retorts foul abuse with soft reproof, and returns bitter taunts, nay, the severest injuries, offered in their hour of triumph, with forgiveness and toleration, when that hour of insolence has given way to a period of humiliation, its inseparable follower. "Whosoever through
 " his private judgment," say the Articles of our Faith, "willingly and purposely
 " doth openly break the traditions and
 " ceremonies of the Church, which be not
 " repugnant to the word of God, and be
 " ordained and approved by common au-
 " thority, ought to be rebuked openly,
 " (that others may fear to do the like) as
 " he that offendeth against the common
 " order of the Church, and hurteth the
 " authority of the magistrate, and wound-
 " eth the consciences of the weak bre-
 " thren."

This passage contains the whole of the reasons upon which obedience to civil au-

E

thority

thority is founded, and by its plain and and obvious wisdom at once points out our duty, and punishes our disobedience; leaving to the miserable criminal the painful consciousness of having attempted, in defiance of reason, to introduce misery and devastation into the peaceful habitations of his neighbours.

Indeed, while language like that conveyed in this Sermon is confined to few, and is read with rapture only by congenial spirits, it ought not to be entirely suppressed, even if it were possible, but should be reserved as a warning voice, to tell the rest of the world that such men are abroad, and, like crossed houses, are to be avoided as pestilential. This wise connivance must not, however, be carried too far, as perhaps it would be, if we were to remain silent at the present period, when whole nations, less enlightened, indeed, than ourselves, have fallen under attacks of the like nature; and though they exhibit a picture of distress to the prudent, give proof likewise of success to the wicked. Let the consequence be equal, and as it sharpens the

appetite of the one, may it excite the zeal of the other ! lest that, furrounded as we are by all the blessings of peace and of civilized life, great in arts as in arms, the envy and admiration of the world, we do not fall from this enviable eminence, this state of unparalleled prosperity, into that gulph, which opens wide for the best and strongest establishments of frail mortality : remembering always, in the words of the great Poet of Nature, that, proud and secure as we may think the happiness of Great-Britain ; yet when royal state is down, when dignities are despised, and offices traduced ; when the vanity of other countries is aped in this ; when the time is come to mock at form, and when riot is our care,

“ It will become a wilderneck again,
Peopled with wolves, its old inhabitants.”

F I N I S.

[illegible]

1. I will become a member of the
2. I will become a member of the